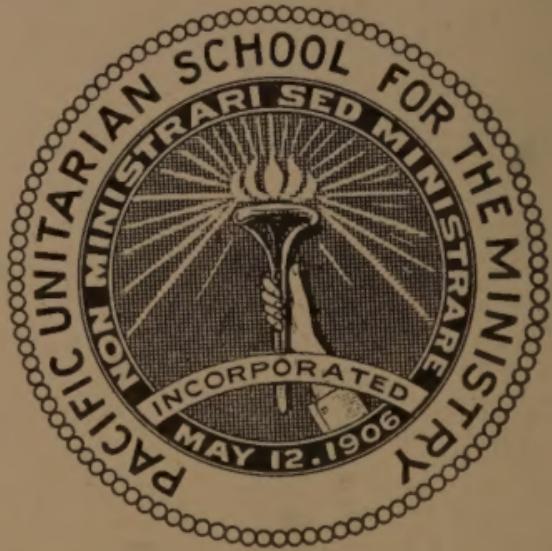


Captain Israel

The Hopeful



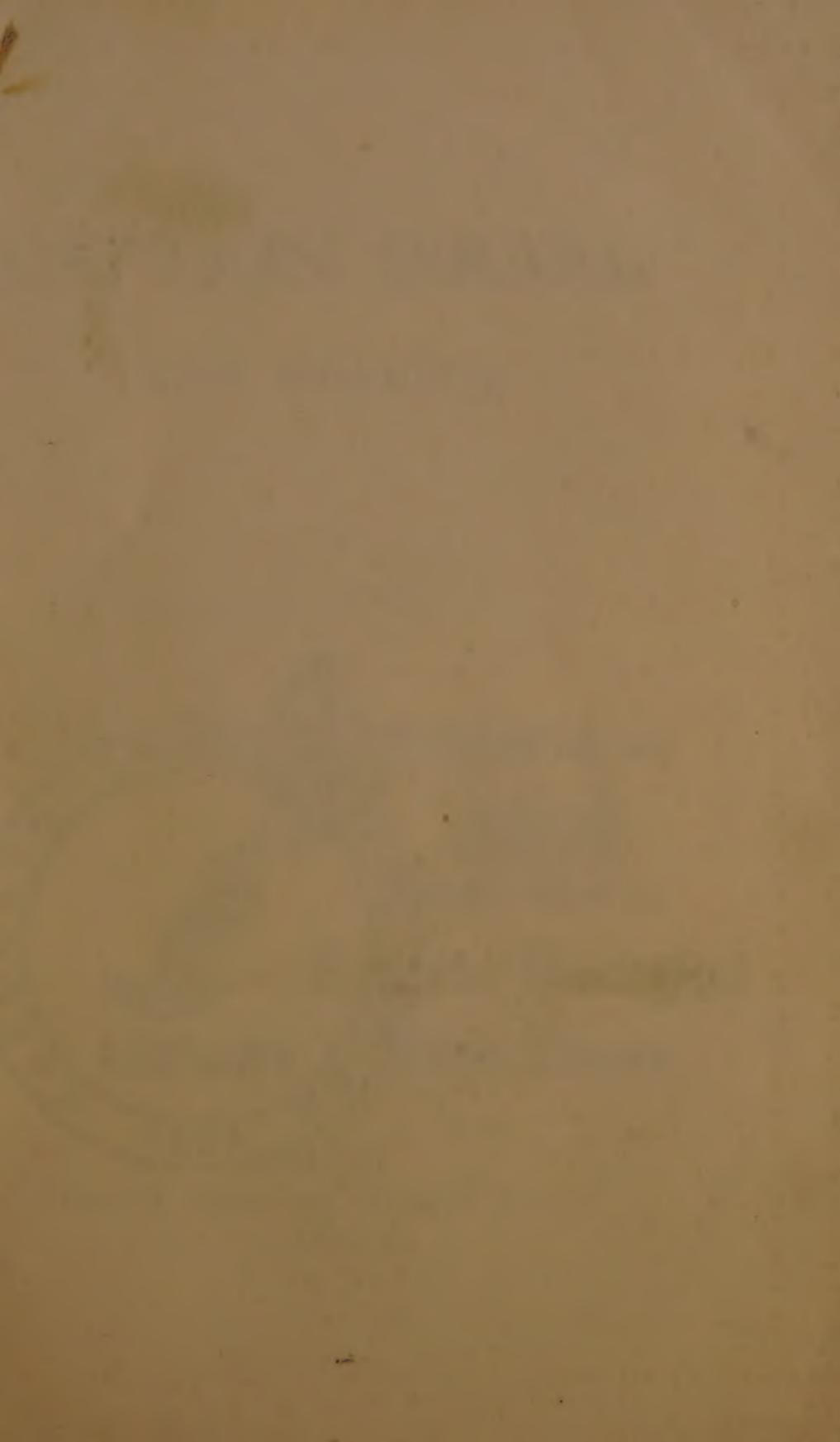
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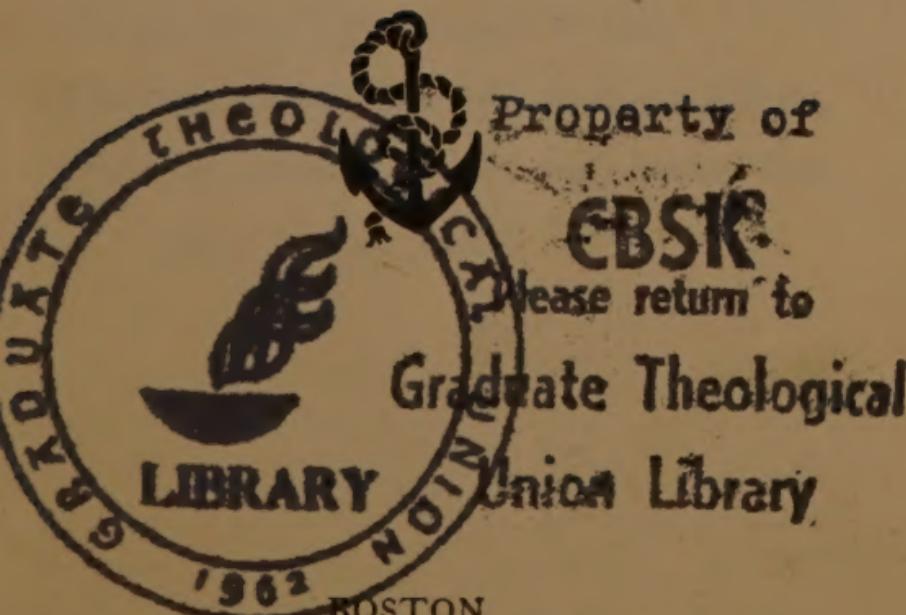
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CAPTAIN ISRAEL

THE HOPEFUL

Albert Walkley



GEO. H. ELLIS, 272 CONGRESS STREET

1899

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P 836
W 154

THIS is the captain's last voyage.

He commands a new ship.

It is the sea of life on which he sails.

The ship is laden, hold and decks, with hope.

There is abundance for any harbor into
which he may enter.

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CAPTAIN ISRAEL, THE HOPEFUL.

CHAPTER I.

LAMARTINE.

WE took the steamer at Boston. We were off to Maine for our summer holidays. Away from business and "society," we were going to one of the quietest spots in the land, and to the companionship of a man whom sky and sea had filled with their own boundless life.

As we drew near the Maine coast, a fog fell upon us, so that we had to thread our way in faith through the many little islands close to the southern shore. As we rounded a promontory exposed to the open sea, we got a touch of a storm which gave us an idea of what old Atlantic could do. Those of us who were not sailors were glad when

we came under the shelter of two or three islands not far from shore. In half an hour more we were safe in the harbor of Bayford, where we were to wait for the little steamer that was to take us across the inlet to Lamartine. This inlet is called François Bay. Promontories and islands shut it in from the great ocean.

While standing on the wharf and looking across the bay, we saw a speck on the waters, puffing away as if with each puff the whole would go up in smoke. Nearer it came. "Yes, it is the 'Ajax,'" was the cry. "There she comes." And, true enough, when the mite of a steamer came to the wharf, we read on its side the name of the mighty Ajax.

We put our trunks on board; and, as there were five of them, they took up most of the space on the upper deck. But they served as seats for the first-class passengers, the only seats in sight: second-class passengers could stand. When out a little way, we were glad enough to pull these ex-

temporized seats close to the smoke-stack; for the air was cool on the upper deck, and the warmth of the stack was most enjoyable.

As we drew near Lamartine, we marked at once the fine wharf, with many of the modern appliances for loading and unloading vessels. Some, therefore, thought that Lamartine was a busy town with a large shipping trade. But these new-comers were quickly set right by one who had spent many happy summers in this quiet place. "Lamartine," he said, "is like some store-keepers, who put into their show windows most of their goods. This wharf has seen better days."

Valises in hand and trunks following on a hay-rack-wagon, we reached our boarding-places,—country houses with hens and chickens about, with potatoes and corn growing in the fields near shore, peas ripening, and, better than all else, good home-cooking within.

The town itself kept close to the sea. It

seemed afraid to leave the water to climb the hills that skirted the shore. Some said Lamartine did not care for such hard work as climbing; while others said its people were of the sea, and their home must be by the sea. For them its waves gave forth music, and its storms were reminders of by-gone toils. The people held that the moon rising in the east, and throwing a pathway of light across the ocean to the very foot of their town, was more than the moon did anywhere else in the great, round world. And as for the sun, when he harnessed his fiery steeds and came up from the ocean depths, fresh from a morning bath in the clear salt water, he greeted Lamartine as he never thought of greeting the larger cities, which had no time to mark his glories, so immersed were they in business. The stars, too, smiled into the ocean; and all Lamartine saw that the smile was returned by the glad waters, which rejoiced in their fellowship with the sky. For these reasons the town stayed

close to shore, and left to the trees the hills as their undisturbed homes. And, as if in gratitude, trees and hills took their part in making the town a place blessed of nature; for, when sun or moon set in the west, hills and trees together threw their shadows upon the shore, and far and deep into the bay, giving double beauty to all around.

In Lamartine there are no side streets. It is a town of one street wandering along the seacoast, and, seeming to tire of being a town street, becomes a country road, and keeps on as a road, away from sea and hill, to the busy town of Edwardsburg.

Two of those who landed from the "Ajax" were to live for the summer with William Israel, known in Lamartine as "Cap' Israel, the Hopeful." One of these was a doctor, who said he must have a rest for one summer, even if he should lose all his practice. The other was a minister, who could never quite get rid of his liking for a talk on theology, no matter where he went,

and who found that Captain Israel had a theology of his own, the web of which was the sea and the woof the sky, while the odd threads, which gave brightness to all, were out of the captain's own life and Lamartine's quaint ways.



CHAPTER II.

CAPTAIN ISRAEL.

WHEN darkness fell upon land and sea, Captain Israel and his two companions would go down to the shore to watch the tide come in. Their resting-place was an old upturned row-boat lying on the beach, its days of usefulness being over. On this the three would sit, the captain in the middle. "Boys" was the term the captain would use in addressing minister and doctor together. But, when he spoke only to the minister, it was, "Eh, Parson"; and when to the doctor, it was, "Well, Doc."

And perhaps he had reason on his side when he rose to fatherhood over these two dignified professionals, whose smooth faces were in marked contrast with his own furrowed countenance. The captain's face was like the sea, and the furrows, like the waves, deep and strong. And, though furrowed, it had to it the beauty of the sea, and the calm thereof. A storm, too, could

sweep across it, like that of the angry ocean.

The captain had another reason for calling his companions "boys." They were boys again down by the sea. It brought back to them the boyhood love of fun. The drift-wood from far and near, cast by the tide upon the shore, called up the bonfires of days gone out of time, but not out of memory. The minister lacked the courage to say what he felt,— "Let us be boys again." But one evening he did get so far as to say: "I wish our boys were here, Doctor, to build for us a bonfire out of this drift-wood. It would make a grand one." "Vell," quickly the doctor responded, "ve vill build our own bonfires, and be boys again ourselves." The doctor was born a German, and, when in earnest, made sad work with his w's, though at other times his English was perfect. The wood was gathered by the two newly made boys, and placed close to a large bowlder. The match was lighted, the

fire started. More wood was piled on, until the bonfire rivalled the moon in its light-giving-power. If the fire showed any signs of decline, the doctor would call out, "The fire is dwinging," and start off for a box or barrel just in from the sea, and so saturated with fish-oil that, when the fire got hold of it, the flames would mount skyward as if they meant to touch the clouds. And with the ascending flames the captain's spirit would rise. Doctor and minister would wait for him to open the conversation which was always a part of these evenings by the sea.

"These colors," began the captain, "the dark blue sea, the pale moon, the red flames, and that pathway of light on the waters from the moon to our feet call up my old notions about the days of the week. I had for each day its own color."

"How was that, Captain?" asked the doctor.

"Well, Doc., I'll tell you. It was this way: Monday was orange; Tuesday, dark

blue; Wednesday, dark red; Thursday, purple; Friday, gray; Saturday, light blue; Sunday, a kind of pink. And, when I'd think of the day, its color would come up at once and fill my mind."

"Odd!" said the minister.

"One gets strange notions at sea, Parson. But I rather liked my notion. It filled up the time, and broke the monotony of sailing; and in a calm it was most helpful."

"On land do you see these colors?" inquired the minister.

"Not now, Parson. But then, before I gave up the sea, a change came over my colors. I see now all the days as white. All the colors have united to crown all days alike with white. They are all God's bright days."

"Sunday and Monday you mean, Captain?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, all alike; good and for good," answered the captain. "And, Parson, that reminds me of something I want to say to

THE HOPEFUL

• 11

you. You don't feel hurt that old Cap' Rogers asked me to say the words to-morrow at the grave, when we put his boy to rest?"

"Not at all, Captain. You can best say the word. The office is of little worth at the grave. Things are so real there that the word must be from the soul to reach the soul."

"'Tis this way, Parson. When I came back from the sea to live again in this my old home, I brought with me notions of my own about God and death and the great life beyond. I found Lamartine people, like most others, in darkness. The days of the week to them were not unlike my old Friday, pretty gray, and often dark altogether. If one of them died, oh, what blackness, Parson! And the parsons, somehow, at the funerals made all still darker. In the church the mournfullest songs were sung. At the grave all hope seemed to be buried in spite of what they said about immortality. And so I said to myself, 'Cap'

William Israel, God has called you to brighten up the lives of these people.' And I set about it. And one bit of my work is that our funerals have some light and hope to them, though sad enough still. That's why Cap' Rogers wants me to say the words. I'm glad you feel as you do about it, Parson."

"The fire has dwinged all away," said the doctor; "and it is too cool for us to stay out longer."



CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN ISRAEL AT THE GRAVE.

“ ‘TIS time we were going, Parson,” said the captain, about ten o’clock on the morning of young Rogers’s funeral. “ You are going with us, Doc. ? ”

The doctor said he was, and the three started off at a brisk walk for old Captain Rogers’s place.

“ You see, Parson, Cap’ Rogers was more than once my first mate. We have weathered many a storm together. And he wants me to help him weather this one. The storms at sea are hard enough; but there come some harder, a mighty sight.”

“ We need some one to say to the waters, ‘ Peace be still,’ ” said the minister.

“ Yes, Parson; but the voice of hope and trust always says that, and the waters obey. And, when to-day you pray, fill up, Parson, with hope. Remember, we are not strangers or servants in a foreign land. We are children at home in the Father’s house. That

stills the fiercest storm, Parson. I have tried it."

"I'll try," was all the minister felt like saying.

By this time they had reached Captain Rogers's home, a plain country house like its neighbors, perhaps somewhat larger, painted white, and with a piazza on two sides.

There were no words between the two old captains when they met. They looked at each other and understood each other. Captain Israel seemed to say, "I'm standing by, Mate"; and Captain Rogers seemed to reply, "I know it, Cap'."

Captain Israel introduced in Lamartine a new way of conducting funerals. He had the young men carry on their shoulders the coffin to the church. Thus burdened they would lead the procession. And so it was at young Rogers's funeral: the young men led; then came the neighbors, men and women, young and old.

The church to which they were going

was the town church. It belongs to no one sect: all have rights there. It is a plain white structure, with Doric columns in front, and a steeple which for architectural symmetry has no superior. Back of it is a hill, sloping with its green side down to the foundation of the church. And this quiet spot, which always catches the early sun rays as they sweep across the sea, is Lamartine's cemetery.

On the way to the church the captain handed the minister a piece of paper. "There, Parson," said he, "are the things I wish you'd read in the church."

The minister took the paper, and on opening it saw that it was covered with passages cut out of a Bible of large type. It showed signs of frequent use.

"They are old, Parson, but they are good. They came from the depths of great souls, and so they'll find all souls in their depths."

The extracts were from the twenty-third Psalm, and the one hundred and

thirty-ninth and the ninety-first; also the Beatitudes, and the words of Jesus about the lilies and birds, of which God took such care.

“And, Parson, read this. I can’t do it, but you can. What I think out for myself, that I can speak.”

The “this” was a new poem, beginning,

“When light unveiled her radiant face,
And wrapped the world in her embrace,”

and with a chorus,—

“Death never,
Life ever and forever.”

It was this chorus best pleased the captain, and he asked the minister to read it so that all should feel it.

The procession reached the church. The minister prayed, then read the Bible passages and the poem handed him by the captain. And, different from most funerals, there was no call to those present to come and take a farewell of the dead. “For,”

said the captain, "there is no farewell to take. It is

"Death never,

Life ever and forever."

After the singing of a hymn the choir, without any notice, formed a procession, and led the way out of the church to the cemetery. They were followed by all in the church, even the children falling into line. As they moved to the cemetery, the choir sang,—

"He leadeth me! O blessed thought!"

All joined in the last verse, closing,

"E'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me."

The grave was reached and the coffin lowered before the singing had ended. No earth was thrown upon that coffin to chill with sepulchral sound. Nor was that holy air profaned by the words, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

The captain spoke: "My friends, often have you heard me say what I am to say again to-day. From this our hillside resting-place we look out upon the broad sea. As we stand here, the sun floods both sea and hillside. Our lives are in the same way flooded by the infinite life, light, and love. At our feet fall the shadows of the trees, — trees we love, trees of our own planting, most of them. But the shadows fall because of the great light. Were there no light, there would be no shadows. Death is a shadow cast for a moment on our pathway by the Infinite Light.

"See, too, how narrow this grave is. But mark well how it opens out into the boundless sky. Life seems narrow,— yours and mine; but, like to the grave, it opens out into the Infinite Life above."

Thus spoke the captain; and, when he had finished, he gave a nod to the choir, which they understood. They formed and led the procession as before, this time singing,

"Nearer, my God, to thee."

Slowly they marched out of the cemetery, all singing as best they could the uplifting hymn. As they neared the gate, the last verse was reached:—

“Or if on joyful wing
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,
Upward I fly,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee.”

It was a note of victory.

When all was over, Captain Israel and Captain Rogers stood apart by themselves near the church door. They seemed to be alone on shipboard, looking out on a heavy sea which they must weather together. Their faces were filled with the hope which proclaimed the Infinite Harbor in sight. The two parted. Then all left the cemetery again to the sea, the sky, and God.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WATER OF LIFE.

BACK of Captain Israel's house was a spring, known far and wide as "The Spring," and celebrated for the purity of its water.

To get to it from the captain's place, a small, well-wooded hill had to be climbed; and the pathway was rough and stony, so that on a warm day the short journey thither would tire one and cause him to long for water. For this reason, as well as others, this journey was one of the Captain's pleasantest occupations.

After an early breakfast the captain would ask, "Who is for the spring?" He would wait a minute, and ask again: "Who is for the spring? Eh, Parson! Well, Doc.!" Both were generally glad to go with the captain, especially the minister.

It was on a certain hot August morning that the three climbed the stony little hill. They were without coats, and their hats

were in their hands. And, though he had often taken the journey, the captain, when they reached the spring, was the most exhausted of the three. Yet he waited until his companions had taken of the water before he drank. "I like to be awfully thirsty when I drink here. When as a boy I came to this spring, it tasted better than anything else on earth. And, when out on the sea, many a time I have longed to be beside it, kneeling down and drinking until I could drink no more."

About the spring is a stone wall, which holds the water as in a well. The doctor asked when it was built.

"Not long since, only about five years ago, Doc. We used to kneel to drink, not dip into the water with a tin cup as we do now. And, do you know, I think it was a good way to do, to kneel. I'm glad that as boy and man I've knelt here. It has made of this place a holy spot, a sacred shrine."

The minister said something about the water of life.

"Just what I've often called it, Parson. It is when one's thirsty, and comes to a cool spring like this and drinks, that he knows what a blessing water is. And it is the same with real religion. When one knows God as his Father and Friend, and the knowledge lives in him, religion is like this spring: it is water springing up unto everlasting life. It comes as this water does from unseen depths, pure, cool, fresh, living. That's a sermon for you, Parson."

"I expect," said the doctor, "to hear the parson giving us all winter many sermons he's got out of you, Captain."

"Oh, let him, Doc. They're not mine. They are out of Nature's heart, out of God, rather; for I like that better. Now I don't say anything against books, but I wonder if it would not be well if the parsons talked less than they do out of books."

"But, Captain, there is one book that is the water of life," said the minister.

"No, it isn't, Parson: that's where you are wrong."

"But I have met none who honor the Bible more than you do, Captain. And I wish in my heart it was to me what it seems to be to you."

"The trouble is you make the Bible a part of your profession, a tool only. It would be a good thing to leave it, if you could, and come to it thirsty: then you'd see the difference between the Bible and the water of life it helps you to."

"How can I?" earnestly inquired the minister.

"Eh, Parson, that is easier asked than answered. Somehow, the Bible came to me, not I to it. It found me, not I it. The truth is, I did not much care for it; but I began to read it on dull days on the ship. I read it just as it is. I did not know much about the things about the Bible, not as much as I know now. I had never heard of higher criticism or lower criticism or any other kind of criticism. I did not read it with any idea whether I believed it or didn't believe it. I

just read it. And, to tell the truth, it came to me — a man over forty — with as much interest as old Robinson Crusoe did when I was a boy."

"I'd give the better part of my practice," exclaimed the doctor, "if I could say that."

"I'd do more," cried the minister. "Robinson Crusoe once lived for me as the Bible never has."

"Eh, Parson, it is a living book, when you get at it. I now treat the books as living, their writers as living. They talk to me in the flesh, and I talk back. They say what they have to say. I listen, and what finds me I take: what don't, I have to leave. What is water to my soul I drink. What is not water I can't drink. I don't feel bound up by Amos or Isaiah any more than I do by you, Parson. Nor do I let Paul have all his own way. And, as for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, I sometimes think I see beyond them to a Jesus they did not themselves see."

"How is that, Captain?" both asked.

"See here. Let us take this spring. You see that drain which carries away the surplus water. The water as it flows into the drain is good and pure; but soon leaves float on it, and particles of dust cover it, so that it is not the same clear water it was when it left the spring. A little way down you'd hardly think it was water from the spring at all. It is not the same clear water as comes bubbling up from the white-sand below."

All three, as by impulse, took a fresh look into the spring, and marked again the stirring of the white sands within.

The captain took up his parable, and explained it: "Now the noble spirit of the prophets is the clear water. The spirit of the greatest of prophets, Jesus, is the world's clearest water. But leaves and dust have gathered upon these waters. The writers and speakers, one and all, have let leaves fall upon the waters from their trees of supposed knowledge; and dust, too, from ancient thought has fallen upon them,

and these have destroyed the purity of the waters of the spirit. I feel I can pick up a leaf here which fell from Jewish writers who wanted a conquering Messiah, or one there that fell from the limited scientific knowledge of the age, or that I can filter out the dust of rabbinical lore which lies thick on the surface of Paul's letters."

"But, Captain," said the minister, "that needs great scholarship."

"Eh, Parson, it does. But not so much after all as it needs a soul. Let me change the figure, Parson. Some people, you know, in religion would sooner have a cartload of quartz than a few nuggets of pure gold. They want bulk. Their faith is a matter of length and weight. Now, I say, Parson, that I have an idea that I can tell the words of Jesus just as a miner can gold. His words sparkle as diamonds do. My soul feels the sparkle. And this is true of all the writers of the Bible worth reading."

"You mix up your figures, Captain," said the doctor.

“Perhaps so, Doc.; but the spirit of the Bible is the pure water, or it is like the gold in the quartz, or like the diamond in brightness. One can’t read the Bible freely and honestly without its spirit sending a thrill of life through his soul. The Bible is not the water of life. It is like that wall which holds the waters of this spring, or it is like this cup with which we dip up water. But, mark you, this spring is not the only spring of water, nor does even the Bible hold all the water of life. God is infinite.”

“I wish,” said the doctor, “that we could carry this spring back with us.”

“No, Doc. I’m glad you can’t. If you could, it would be like the parson’s Bible, dead. Let it stay here in its native hills and with its old companions, the trees; and so with your Bible, study it amid its own surroundings.”

“One more drink,” said the doctor, “before we return.”

CHAPTER V. THE AWAKENING.

“I SAID,” began the captain, “that I’d tell you how my eyes were opened. I don’t wonder, after my experience, that Paul and those who tell us of his conversion said a great light shone about him. Only in my case all was very quiet.”

“As it should be,” put in the doctor, who was prejudiced against excitement in religion.

“Perhaps the reason I never took to a stormy way of ‘getting religion,’ ” the captain continued, “is that I have had storm enough on the sea.”

“Besides, it is bad for the nervous system,” remarked the doctor. “I think people ought to be decent about religion, above all things. What did the apostle say about doing things decently and in order?”

“I think they ought to be religious, above all things. And a judicious shock to the

nervous system of some optimists would do them and others good." This, of course, was from the minister, who had to battle with indifference to religion of all kinds, — that which shocked the nervous system and that which left that system untouched. "Please go on with your story, Captain. The Doctor and I will have this out at another time."

"It is a short story; but, short as it is, it has to do with two continents. Part of it belongs to Lamartine, and part of it has to do with a haven in Scotland. Mrs. Bidford, too, has her part in it. She was not always what she is now in her way of thinking. Once she was what they call good and sound in doctrine, or at least she thought so. She honestly believed that she believed what she professed.

"I was kind of off, at least according to common report. I could not help it, any more than I could help breathing if I intended to keep alive. It was in the air. The preachers were having it back and

forth about Adam and creation. I never could feel a bit sorry about my share in the sin of Adam. And I came to think I had no part in it at all.

“Then, again, the rocks and stars were against Genesis. And, somehow, the ways the preachers tried to get the Genesis story of creation into harmony with the creation story told by rocks and stars didn’t seem to me to be square dealing with either of them.

“I kept on doubting and doubting about Bible stories, floods, and sun standing still, and angels coming down, and interferences generally, until I said, ‘There is no such thing as a miracle: the glory of God is in the order and beauty of things.’ I got just where the good people all said I would. They were sorry for me, and there was need of it. Perhaps you think this thing called freedom was a comfortable thing to have. Well, it wasn’t. It was so new that I did not know what to do with it, and I didn’t know what it was going to do with

me. There were times when I wished I was back again to where I could take things just as they are written, and ask no questions; but that couldn't be, it was too late. There was no use in trying: I could not get back. I had to go out, and in the sweat of my brow earn my own faith."

"The fall over again," said the doctor.

"That's so; and I think that perhaps some such meaning as I found in my experience is at the bottom of the story of the cherubim and the flaming sword at the gate of the garden from which poor Adam is said to have been banished."

"After we eat of the tree of knowledge," said the minister, "we can never think as we thought before we ate."

"But Mrs. Bidford, Parson, was afraid to eat. She," the captain went on, "held on with might and main to the 'sound doctrines.' I remember well the day I met her in Warren & Birch's store opposite the church. And I remember, too, what she was buying. I'll never forget it. It was a

paper of hooks and eyes. In our conversation we got round to religion, as we always did when we talked a quarter of an hour together. You know that the weather, the crops, the church and its squabbles, religion of some sort, and the aches and pains of the people cover most all we have to talk about in this quiet town. Politics has its place ; but, as we are most all of one party up here, there's no great excitement over politics.

" But on that day, a cold February morning, which perhaps made us both a bit sharper than need be, Mrs. Bidford and I did not get along as well as usual. I perhaps was to blame. Be that as it may, we got round to miracles ; and we argued and argued. And I think even now that I was getting the better of the argument, when she up and said: ' I don't want to hear another word, Captain Israel. I've heard all I want to ! ' With that she shut both her eyes tight as she could, and said right out in earnest: ' I'll go it blind ! I'll go it

blind ! I'm as blind to all your arguments, Captain, as one of these eyes ! ' pointing to the paper of hooks and eyes she had just purchased, and which she held up in her hand for me to see. Just then like a flash the words came to me ; and I said, ' Mrs. Bidford, God is light.' I think the words did us both good."

The captain paused. He was living over again the scene ; for he went on, half to himself and half to his companions : —

" It all seems but yesterday, though it is nigh on to twenty years ago.

" My eyes were open. I wanted them filled with light. And, of all places to look for help, it seemed to me that Scotland was the last. The thought of its Calvinism always gave me a chill worse than the coldest day on shipboard. But to me Scotland is now a land of light and blessing. And this is the way it came about. My business took me to the city of Aberdeen. After transacting part of it, I had to wait a day or two before I could wind it

up. What was I to do with this spare time? I asked myself. But I soon settled that matter. I had long wanted to see the fisher-folk of Scotland. So down to Stonehaven I went, a seacoast town about fifteen miles by the railroad from Aberdeen.

“After I had satisfied my curiosity to its full with the fishermen, and was walking back to the railway station, I passed a bit of a shop. In it was a small window, across which was stretched a string, to which pipes and tobacco, candies and cakes were hung. In the midst of this array of small goods was a little red limp-covered book. It was close to the glass; and I could read its title, ‘Conduct of Life,’ by R. W. Emerson. Now this might not have attracted me at home; but there, in such company, and in a distant land, I was drawn to it. I went into the bit of a shop, in which there was hardly room enough to turn round, and bought the book for a shilling. And I have often said it was the cheapest and richest kingdom man ever purchased.

“When I began to read, somehow I did not take to the first chapter. But I turned to the one on ‘Worship,’ and read and read again. Life came to me, light poured in upon me. I felt that here in this book I was in company with a true believer, a man of faith. He said, ‘We are born believing.’ I felt that faith meant a trust in the highest word of your own soul, trust in God in you and in all. Every line of the chapter opened up for me my own soul, and I felt that the sum of the religion of Jesus was implicit trust in God as our real Father.”

“You’d call that conversion, Captain, would you not?”

“I don’t mind, Parson, what you call it. I only know that I saw the light.”



CHAPTER VI.

ON THE OCEAN.

“THE saddest and yet the trip that touched my life deepest was one I took from New York to New Orleans and back.

“We were to go by Key West; and as that was my wife’s native place, I took her with me. And we took our boy with us, a little fellow over a year old, our only son.

“I can understand, Parson, as I could not at one time, why, when Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac, the command runs, ‘Take now thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest, even Isaac.’ Of course, I can’t think God asked the sacrifice; but the writer of the story wants to show how the human affections triumphed over an old and false faith. I don’t care much for the story, but I do like the writer. I like him for the emphasis he puts on a father’s love. Fathers can love, eh, Parson? ”

“I have found it so, Captain. How came Jesus to place in the foreground of

his teaching the Fatherhood of God, if he had not found in Joseph a father's deep affection?"

"But how we have marred and blurred it, Parson!" said the doctor. "We physicians find how strong is the father's love."

"Well, Doctor, I'm glad to hear you say that. That God is my Father, real and immediate, everywhere and always, has gone to the very roots of my soul with life-giving power. The parsons seem to be afraid of it, as too good to believe. Now there is nothing too good for me to believe about God."

"You were on your way to New Orleans, Captain," the minister remarked, to draw the captain back to his story.

"So I was, Parson,—so I was. We sailed south to Key West, where I left my wife and boy, and went with the ship to New Orleans, where we took on a cargo of molasses, bound for New York. In less than a month we were back again to Key West. There my wife again came aboard. But I

noticed that she was not quite as brisk as when I left her; nor was the boy, either. Not much the matter, though, I said to myself. She seemed anxious to come aboard, more so than I expected. For my part, I thought she would be loath to leave her folk so soon. But we were not long out to sea when I discovered the cause of her readiness to get away from Key West, for both wife and boy were taken suddenly ill. How I dreaded to let the thought have place in my mind. Nor would I give it place there, until my wife said to me, 'Yellow fever, husband, both of us.' "

The captain looked out upon the sea, his face lighted with a glory not before seen by his companions. They expected great sadness and were astonished at the transfiguration of his countenance.

"A few days," said the captain "completed the work. They died. There is no need of telling of my loneliness, or of saying that fear as well as sorrow was aboard our ship. Few of us care to die,—least of all, rough sailors.

"You know how we bury at sea, eh, Par-
son?"

"I think so, Captain."

"I got my loved ones ready for their ocean graves. And when all was ready I was alone. I did not ask any on board to come near. The men quietly attended to their duties. It was a bright night, the sea was still, the stars above made the ocean seem a second heaven beneath. So that it has always appeared to me that I let my dead move away from me between two bright heavens which gave welcome to my dear ones.

"What do you think of that last book in the New Testament, eh, Parson?" abruptly asked the captain.

The minister hesitated to answer. He wished to be true to himself, but his training and profession stood somewhat in his way. But he answered: "It is somewhat puzzling, and I think that commentators have made it more mysterious than it really is. There are some fine thoughts in it."

"That isn't saying much, Parson. But it is those very fine passages that I don't care much for. And you parsons read them at funerals. I mean, 'There shall be no more sea there, no more night there.' What glorious revelations of God we shall miss without these! The sky and sea are two leaves of the great folio edition of God's real and wonderful revelation. They are part of an Old Testament back of the Oldest Testament ever written. They are open pages on which are written God's wisdom, care, and love. Jesus loved the sky and sea."

The captain ceased talking, and stood looking out upon the waters before him. There was companionship between him and them. Neither minister nor doctor wished to disturb him. They led the way along the sandy beach toward home. The captain followed a few steps behind.



CHAPTER VII.

SEEING GOD.

IT was near the end of their vacation when Captain Israel gave to his companions an account of a visit he paid to Boston as a delegate to the May anniversary meetings. "This is how I came," said the captain, "to take to that verse in John's Gospel where Jesus is made to say, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' I was going down to Boston; and the church folk said that, as I was going anyway, I might as well as not represent them at the meetings. When I got there and heard the speeches and essays, I said, 'Well, some of these meetings are good, some only passable,' leastwise that is how they struck me. And, as I listened, I would sometimes wish that the ministers talked more out of a closer touch with real things than so much out of books. But that's one of my prejudices, as you know.

"But there was one meeting I'll never

forget. It was not only what I got in the meeting, but what I got after it. Perhaps it was after the meeting I got most good.

“ You know, Parson, the street opposite the Public Garden. And you know there are art stores along the street. It was Wednesday morning, and the meetings seemed to have taken a rest; for there was to be no meeting until afternoon. I put in my time looking into the windows of these art stores. Pictures of a mother and her baby boy I liked much,— most, though, those that had no light about the heads. Only plain woman and plain child seemed to touch me deepest. That was the way it came to me, and I had my reason for it. I have just told you why.

“ I began to think about seeing my loved ones. And from that rose the longing to see God. I knew well enough the foolishness of the wish, for God is Spirit. For all that, queer things do stir the soul. Don’t you think, Parson, that these stirrings are prophecies of answers to come? ”

"I think, Captain, there are depths deeper than we have ever dreamed of. We are fearfully and wonderfully made in spirit."

"But my answer came sooner than I could possibly think it would. As I was thinking in this way, I saw some of the parsons walking in little groups to a brown stone church near the garden. You both know it?"

"Yes, Captain," both doctor and minister at once answered.

"I said to myself, 'There's going to be a meeting of some kind, after all.' I made up my mind that I was going to miss nothing I could go to. We folk in the country are not so full of meetings that we have meeting-dyspepsia, as you city folk seem to have."

"Have mercy, Captain, on the parsons," pleaded the doctor.

"Let the captain lay on; for I do think we so exhaust ourselves in meetings that we have little energy for much else," was the minister's answer to the doctor.

"As I said, I followed the little groups of ministers ; and, just as I suspected, there was to be a meeting. These ministers did not go into the church, as one might think they would, but quietly went round to the chapel back of the church. I went in, too. That chapel is not as big as our Union Church here in Lamartine. I took a seat ; and let me say, Parson, that, for a rich city church, that seat was about as uncomfortable an one as you could find in any meeting-house I ever was in.

"The chapel soon filled up,—all ministers. I was the only un-parson-like one in the place ; but, as no one objected, I stayed right along. I guess you know the place, Parson."

"I know it well, Captain ; and likely enough I was there that day. I'll soon be able to tell you after you tell what you heard."

"Heard, Parson ! Well, at first everybody was talking. I really think that I would give the parsons the prize in talking

against any sewing society I ever heard of. But, as soon as the chairman called order, there was perfect quiet. Then a simple prayer, and it was a prayer. The man that made that prayer was near God. 'We will now listen to the paper by Rev. J. W. Kendrick on "The Daring Faith,"' said the chairman. When I heard the name, I said to myself: 'Only a sailor lad would take that title. He's a son of the sea.' Well, he went on with his paper; and how his words did glow! They were like the waves, all lighted with the sun. They showed that he had the brave heart of his sailor father. He told us that, even if we were not sure of an immortal reward, we ought to have such faith in man, such faith in this world, that we would work on, work ever, until this world was the divine thing it ought to be, and man a more blessed being. It was a brave heart out of which the words came,— a heart that had the courage of the sailor father. I felt proud of the lad, though, indeed, he was no lad then."

"Oh, yes, I was at that meeting, Captain."

"But that is not all, Parson. I understood that after the paper there was to be a discussion, but I did not just feel like staying for it. And there were others who felt as I did. Among these was an elderly minister, quite tall and straight, his hair long and white, his beard the same, his eyes bright like the stars, his voice quiet and musical."

"I know who it was," said the minister. "He, too, Captain, had somewhat to do with the sea."

"I found that out, for he said a word about shipbuilding. He was standing on the top step of the outer door of the chapel. Others were standing on the lower steps and on the stone walk which leads from the street to the chapel door. These others were younger ministers, who seemed to know the elderly man. They were listening. And I stopped and listened. 'Those were brave words from Brother Kendrick,

boys. His is a daring faith. But, somehow, it comes to me that for us to believe that we are in the image of the Eternal One, and that the divine likeness is to grow ever more clearer throughout full eternity, is the daring faith, after all. And, boys, the most daring faith is, to my mind, the truest and surest one.' My heart leaped within me. And the words 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father' burst open, and revealed the truth in them. I looked for God in my heart, and I believe I found him there."



CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE VACATION.

IT was the last Sunday in August, the last the minister and doctor were to spend that summer in Lamartine. There was to be service in the Union Church morning and evening. The parson was to preach in the morning; a song service was to be held in the evening.

The doctor always prided himself on the part he had in the service. It was to ring the church bell. It was one of his vacation privileges and pleasures. On this Sunday morning he tried to put into the bell-ringing his feelings of sorrow on leaving Lamartine, and of thankfulness for the larger life the captain's words had given him. And any one hearing the bell that day would say that the doctor had succeeded in making it speak for him.

The bell's call was soon answered by the people. The minister and doctor stood on

the green patch at the church door, and watched the little groups as they came from different side roads into the shore road, dignified by the name of Main Street. They came afoot, covered with dust. They came in wagons and buggies, and some few on horseback. Now and then a city turnout brought its master and mistress, man and maid, to the church,—one church for all, as one God for all.

Captain Israel drove up with a big democrat wagon full of elderly folk, whom he had picked up on the way. John Hawkins, tall and straight, and spare as one of the pines of his native Maine, never missed a meeting. He was a pillar in the church at Lamartine, and he seemed to be delighted with his honor,— more so, indeed, than with the fact that he was a political pillar of his party in the large city where he lived during the winter. In his city church he was one of the leaders. He would walk up the aisle of the little country church, carrying his eighty years with the air of a youth of

twenty. Judge Perkins, of the Supreme Court of the State, and all his household, were always on hand a quarter of an hour ahead of time. This he did on principle. "Business methods in God's service are as necessary as in the State's," said the judge. The little church was soon filled, with farmers and farmers' sons, wives, and daughters, old sea captains and young sea captains, judges and lawyers, college professors and State magnates, old and young, rich and poor, learned in books and learned in nature,—God's children.

Captain Israel and the doctor occupied the same pew, well to the front. The captain sat at the end next to the aisle, for he was to take up the collection on his side of the church. And next to him sat the doctor, who seemed to feel that, since he was the bell-ringer, he was one of the chief pillars in the church.

In speaking afterward about the sermon, the doctor said: "I never saw the captain so well pleased. He sat almost perfectly

still. And now and then he'd say to himself, 'He's getting into the right harbor,' or 'The parson has got hold of reality,' or 'He is on the right tack.' "

This was the doctor's account of the captain's conduct. And it is confirmed by what Captain Israel afterward said to the parson.

The simplicity of the sermon, the appeal to the common heart of all, won.

But never did a minister sit down with less self-approval than did the parson that Sunday morning. "What have I said that was original or even more than commonplace? Not a thing. Perhaps I'm not called to preach, after all. I had better give up. I have deceived myself these twenty years."

The open air, and the simple thanks which the people gave the parson on the way home, somewhat healed his heart of its self-inflicted wound. And after dinner the captain's word not only helped him, but surprised him.

"Why, Captain, I said nothing but what any child could say."

"Eh, Parson, and, if you did that, you accomplished the greatest feat in preaching,—leastwise, that's how it seems to me."

"How thankful I am!" said the minister, speaking less to the captain than to some Unseen One.

"I think, Parson, what touched all this morning was the reality in you and your words. You felt that there was no use talking in a learned way. The college professors were to the right of you, and they know more than you about what's in the books. The farmers and the sea captains were to the left of you, and you could not talk out of the books to them; for they would not understand you. So you had to let your heart speak, and it spoke. But I am afraid, Parson, that your theology was not up to the standard."

"How so, Captain?"

"This way, Parson; and here's the doc-

tor to confirm my words. You were too real, too simple, for the standards. You were like the spring, clear to the depths, with the white sands below, bubbling up in purest water."

"The captain has struck the truth, Parson. I'm afraid I'll have to report you to the church board, when we get home. What do you say?" asked the doctor.

"Doctor, you know I want to be true to my church," the minister answered.

"I want to be true to my life," protested the doctor.

"And that is just what you were to-day, Parson, and made us feel we ought to be. How real you made Jesus, when you said he was the 'most human of us all,' 'the revelation of the spiritual richness of mankind'! Why, you made one feel that Jesus could be and was a real example and an inspiration to the weakest, frailest human being. You did not picture him as a warrior, clad in perfect armor, sent to fight a great battle, while we were sent into the

same battle with no armor and with everything to hinder us. No, Parson, you got at the reality. Jesus and you and I are in the same battle, with the same armor."

"But, Captain, I did not say 'mere man,'" anxiously urged the minister, who still was the slave of words.

"No, Parson, 'most man' was your thought, whether or not it was your word. And it is the thought of all in their hearts, whatever may be their creeds." The captain was much in earnest.

"And, more, you made us feel God near us. And here let me tell you a story. It will be the one to most remember this vacation by. You know that during the winter some fifteen or twenty of our town folk meet at my house every Friday evening. We gather around the long table in the dining-room. I sit at the head of the table, for I was made the leader. We take a Bible chapter or some foundation truth in religion. There is perfect liberty and true reverence. The folk bring little blocks of

writing paper and pencils, and we take notes, and compare notes.

“ Among our number is Miss Morton, who thinks for herself, and so does not always see as I do. Nor does she hide her thoughts under a bushel. She says what she thinks. Sometimes she so has disagreed with me that she has protested, ‘ You want to destroy everything, Captain.’ I’d answer, ‘ No, I’m building higher and broader, Miss Morton.’ But never mind our arguments. For seven years we have kept up those meetings,—rich feasts to me they have been. I have seen into the minds and hearts of people. At the close of the seventh year Miss Morton, when we were alone for a minute, said quietly, but earnestly: ‘ Captain Israel, one thing I want to say, You have made God real to me.’ ”

“ Eh, Parson, and you, Doc., if there are any crowns yonder, and any gems in those crowns, ‘ You have made God real to me ’ will be the brightest gem in mine, if there is one for me.”

There was silence for a few minutes, which was broken by a question from the minister.

“ You think, then, there was some of that reality to my words this morning, Captain ? ”

“ I do, Parson.”

“ Thank you, Captain.”

“ And it is just that same reality I always find in Jesus’ words, deeper and richer every time I go to them. In his deepest sorrow God is still ‘ Father.’ And the name comes from his lips as no mere phrase, but as expression of the deep relationship between God and man. Suffering and dying on the cross, still ‘ Father.’ Jesus makes us feel God by our side, helper and friend and companion in life’s joys and life’s sorrows. He makes God real.”

THE END.



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